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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 001423

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE REGISTRATION CLOSES: NOBOA  
AMONG THE THOUSANDS

REF: A. QUITO 1295  
[1](#)B. QUITO 1350  
[1](#)C. QUITO 1264  
[1](#)D. QUITO 1039

Classified By: PolOff Erik Martini for reasons 1.4 (b&d).

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. The last day to register candidates for Ecuador's constituent assembly race ended with mild chaos at the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and Alvaro Noboa once again throwing his hat into the ring. Parties chose a variety of candidates to help them gain seats, from current and resurrected politicians, to activists, beauty queens, and media figures. The TSE decided to preserve proportionality with its rule on assigning seats according to votes, thwarting MinGov Gustavo Larrea's preference for a winner take all system, and Correa's approval rating may be suffering another slight stumble. End Summary.

#### Last Day to Register Candidates Brings Surprises

[1](#)2. (U) Ecuador's perennial campaign mode kicked up a notch on June 18 when more than half of the registered parties waited until mere minutes before the deadline to register their candidates for the constituent assembly, generating surprises. Alvaro Noboa, a second round loser in three consecutive presidential campaigns, astounded observers by announcing he would head the national list of PRIAN candidates. Declaring "this time we'll win", he appeared revived despite his virtual disappearance from politics and public life since November, 2006. Militants of other parties pelted him with rocks and sticks as he made his announcement. Rafael Correa's sister, Pierina, has apparently left the Alianza PAIS fold (Ref A) to head the list of the "Honesty and Patriotism" ticket, a Guayas political movement led by former Guayas governor Efren Roca. Some say her call for Economy Minister Patino's resignation over the video scandal (Ref B) led to the falling out.

#### Parties Scramble to Find Candidates

[1](#)3. (U) As parties threw together lists at the last minute, a mix of candidates emerged. Many traditional parties relied on known politicians to head lists. For example, Anabela Azin, wife of Alvaro Noboa and winner of more votes than any other congressional deputy, resigned her seat in Congress and will head the PRIAN list in Guayas province; similarly, Martha Roldos resigned her seat in Congress to head the RED list in Guayas. The Democratic Left (ID) is counting on former Minister of Economy and Finance Diego Borja to lead

the list in its stronghold of Pichincha. Some parties chose political neophytes with familiar names, such as Amanda Arboleda, the daughter of slain Guayas prison director, Soledad Rodriguez, for the Guayas Alianza PAIS list. Finally, beauty queens and media personalities also figured prominently. The PSC list in Guayas will be headed by Telerama TV reporter and former beauty queen Cristina Reyes. The Alianza PAIS Pichincha list will include Paco Velasco, the director of Radio La Luna famous for ginning up the "forajido" movement to protest and oust President Lucio Gutierrez. For the first time, party lists appear to follow the law requiring equal numbers of men and women candidates.

¶4. (U) For the 24 national assembly seats, parties tried to advance their best known people. To much fanfare, Alianza PAIS supporters, led by President Correa, deposited 856,922 signatures in the TSE (almost ten times the signatures needed) and announced their list of national candidates. Alberto Acosta resigned his job as Minister of Energy and Mining to head the national list along with Monica Chuji, Correa's trusted Secretary of Communications. Correa's Minister of Transport, Trajano Andrade, also resigned to head the PAIS list in Manabi province. In all, 30 movements or political parties presented lists of 24 candidates, 720 aspirants for the 24 national seats (there are 130 seats up for grabs). TSE President Acosta claimed the registered candidates were actually fewer than expected, stating "the signature requirement is a powerful filter that does not permit a proliferation of lists." No major alliances were announced, except a PRE/Socialist alliance in Guayas, the expected Nuevo PAIS/Alianza PAIS/Movimiento PAIS/Democratic Alternative consolidation, and a minor alliance between ID and some new movements that split from Pachakutik.

¶5. (U) Some of the major national lists and candidates include:

- UNO, headed by Mae Montano, Afro-Ecuadorian activist;
- Fuerza Ecuatoriana, headed by democracy activist Humberto Mata;
- PSP, headed by Gilmar Gutierrez, brother of ousted President Lucio Gutierrez;
- RED, headed by former presidential candidate Leon Roldos;
- Concertacion Democratica, headed by democracy activist Cesar Montufar;
- National Honor Movement, headed by Ximena Bohorquez, estranged wife of Lucio Gutierrez and former PSP deputy;
- PSC, headed by Cesar Rohon, President of Ecuador's National Fisheries Council;
- Pachakutik, headed by Silvia Vega, gender rights activist.

#### Correa's Popularity May Continue Its Slide

¶6. (C) No new polls dispute the overwhelming lead Movimiento PAIS claimed in the month of May (Ref A). However, CEDATOS/Gallup has told EmbOffs that it will soon publish a poll showing a two point drop in President Correa's approval rating since May 30, to 65%. Correa's credibility has also reportedly dropped four points over the same time period. The growing Patino video scandal and Correa's fight with the press (Ref C) seem to be dragging down once sky high popularity.

#### TSE Settles on Regulation Preserving Proportionality

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¶7. (C) Preserving a semblance of proportional representation, the TSE announced on June 14 the rule by which it will apportion seats in the Assembly according to the votes cast. Using the "Hare" method, in each voting division (i.e., national, province or foreign) the whole number of valid votes will be divided by the number of seats. The resulting number, representing what the rule calls a "quotient," is the number needed for a party to gain one seat. The more quotients gained by a party, the more seats assigned to the top vote getter in each party. Parties that reach a quotient with a remainder of votes will be assigned

additional seats in order of the size of the remainder. The method is not the "winner-take-all" method advocated by MinGov Larrea (Ref D).

#### Comment

18. (C) Parties scrambled to come up with the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of candidates needed to fill lists for the 130 Assembly seats. The preservation of proportionality dampens MinGov Larrea's scheme to amplify Alianza PAIS's expected plurality with a winner-take-all method, but will make the Assembly as fractured as any elective body Ecuador has produced; 12 national parties, 47 national movements, and 95 provincial movements have all registered. The plethora of well-known candidates, coupled with Correa's costly fights with the press and a scandal may have diluted support for Correa's movement. Correa's political movement does not appear the juggernaut of a month ago, but it is still probably dominant at this point.

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